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ABSTRACT

Information is offered, in question-and-answer format, on the design, objectives, standards, and procedures for the revised French second language program to be offered in Alberta's (Canada) high schools. The new program consists of 3 well-defined levels of competency: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. Learner expectations exist at each level in the areas of experience and communication, cultural knowledge and understanding, use and understanding of the language system, and knowledge and application of learning strategies and processes. The new program also offers local program design flexibility. The questions included here address: university entrance requirements in language; the new secondary-school leaving standard in French; the reason for raising standards; intermediate-level learner expectations; the definition and implications of concurrent registration; alternative ways of implementing the introductory-level French program; articulation of the competency levels; schedule for provincial implementation of the new standards and elimination of old courses; impact on school jurisdictions and local program implementation; credit policies; future curriculum development; needed teacher skills; and teacher professional development needs and options. Names and addresses of officials in each zone of the province and in the central Alberta Education office are also provided. (MSE)

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The New Senior High School French as a Second Language Program

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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The New Senior High School

French as a Second Language

Program

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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INTRODUCTION

Alberta's French as a second language program has been revised to make it more effective and more current. The new program consists of three well-defined levels of competency: **Beginning (Débutant)**, **Intermediate (Intermédiaire)** and **Advanced (Avancé)**. Each of these levels is divided into three sublevels: **Beginning** French 1, 2 and 3, **Intermediate** French 4, 5 and 6, and **Advanced** French 7, 8 and 9. At each level, there are learner expectations in the following areas: experience and communication, cultural knowledge and understanding, use and understanding of the language system (sound-symbol system, vocabulary, grammar and discourse), and the knowledge and application of processes for learning languages.

The new program incorporates current knowledge about second language acquisition and curriculum design; therefore, the program enhances the language development of students along a continuum of communicative growth. As well, the program maintains the degree of local flexibility that school boards have previously enjoyed, so that they can offer French as a second language at different grade levels, depending on community aspirations and available financial and human resources.

The new **Beginning** level senior high school program has been authorized for use in Alberta schools. As the program is being introduced, trustees, superintendents, consultants, school principals, teachers and parents are raising a number of issues. Most concerns relate to **standards, concurrent registration, credits** and **final marks.**

The following questions and answers should be helpful to all those involved. As well, staff of Alberta Education's Language Services Branch and Regional Offices will be pleased to clarify and provide more details. Phone numbers and addresses are provided at the end of this brochure.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **What is the current minimum standard in French as a second language for entrance into university faculties requiring French?**

   The current standard is French 30 of a three-year course sequence beginning in senior high school.

2. **What is the new secondary school-leaving standard in French as a second language?**

   In future, the minimum requirement for the secondary school-leaving standard will be the new **Intermediate** level 6. In other words, by 1995-96, **Intermediate** level 6 will replace the old French 30 program as the requirement for university entrance. It is anticipated that the **Beginning** level will be completed in two courses at the senior high school level, French 13 and French 10, and the **Intermediate** level will be completed in two courses, French 20 and French 30. The **Advanced** level will be completed in three courses, French 31a, French 31b and French 31c.

3. **Why should Alberta raise its standards in French as a second language?**

   Students in Alberta need a sufficient level of knowledge and skills in French to compete with students from other provinces in Canada and other parts of the world where French is compulsory at the elementary and/or junior high school levels. Our French as a second language program should provide students with an ability to use French in the workplace and for entry into post-secondary education. This can be achieved by attaining the **Advanced** level of proficiency.

   As we move towards the **Advanced** level, the incremental change being undertaken is to raise the present language proficiency level in French 30 to the **Intermediate** level 6 over the next five years as a means of enhancing our provincial standards in French as a second language. The current three-year French program reflects less than **Intermediate** level competencies in communicative skills, cultural knowledge and general language education. Over the longer term, we will consider raising our standards to the **Advanced** level.

4. **What are the learner expectations for students at the Intermediate level of proficiency?**

- Students will be able to understand the meaning of oral or written texts, for example, in general conversations, uncomplicated interviews, short routine telephone conversations, simple announcements through the media, and uncomplicated descriptive and narrative texts containing simple and complex statements dealing with a variety of familiar topics.

- Students will be able to express themselves by producing, orally and in writing, a prepared or occasionally spontaneous series of simple and complex sentences in short articles, descriptions, summaries and short business letters about such fields of experience as the world of work, trips and excursions, money, government, and conservation and the environment.

- Students will be able to research and identify similarities and differences between their own culture and francophone cultures.

- Students will be able to understand and use, orally and in writing, the linguistic elements (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) appropriate to simple and complex oral and written texts in the past, present and future tenses.

- Students will be able to formulate hypotheses about oral and written texts, use references independently, correct their own errors and assess whether they have attained the program's learner expectations.

5. **What is concurrent registration in French as a second language?**

"Concurrent registration" is one means of encouraging our students to register in the most challenging courses in languages other than English while still being able to meet the minimum second language requirements (10/20/30) for scholarships and admittance to post-secondary institutions.

In this provision, students are able to register concurrently in higher level language program courses and the lower level 10/20/30. For example, in French, students are able to register at the "10" level in French 10S or French 10N or French

Language Arts 10 or Français 10 and in French 10. At the "20" level, students are able to register in French 20S or French 20N or French Language Arts 20 or Français 20 and in French 20. At the "30" level, students are able to register in French 30S or French 30N or French Language Arts 30 or Français 30 and in French 30. This provision is summarized below:

Registration in one of the following higher level courses	Concurrent with lower level courses
French 10S, 10N, French Language Arts 10, Français 10	French 10
French 20S, 20N, French Language Arts 20, Français 20	French 20
French 30S, 30N, French Language Arts 30, Français 30	French 30

This provision will apply to the proposed French 31a, 31b and 31c courses as these courses are implemented and French 10S/20S/30S and French 10N/20N/30N are eliminated.

Questions 10 and 16 below provide more details about how concurrent registration could be applied to meet an individual student's needs.

6. How will final marks and credits be allocated to students registering concurrently in languages other than English?

Students registering concurrently in two language courses are eligible to receive a final mark in both courses and five credits in the higher stream only, with the exception of the "30" level where students are eligible for a final mark in both courses and credits in both courses. The exception for the 30-level courses would give students increased incentive to complete the higher-level "30" courses. Students may receive up to 20 credits through concurrent registration in two language streams.

Teachers of students who are registered in two French courses will need to develop a system of evaluating student achievement in French 10/20/30 (the lower-level stream) as well as in the higher-level stream. Alberta Education will be providing guidance on student evaluation procedures for these kinds of circumstances.

7. Why do we need this procedure on concurrent registration?

- Our students should attain a substantive level of knowledge and skills in a second language.
- Our students should be challenged to register in language courses that are consistent with their abilities.
- Our students should have fair and equitable access to post-secondary institutions and access to scholarships.
- Our students should be encouraged to take a wide range of senior high school courses so as to ensure a broad general education.

8. Will the provisions for concurrent registration apply to all languages other than English?

This provision will apply to French, German, Ukrainian and other languages for which more than one program stream is available.

9. When will concurrent registration be implemented?

The provision for concurrent registration is effective immediately and is applicable to all students registered in grades 10, 11 and 12.

10. What are alternative ways of implementing the new Beginning level French as a second language program?

Alternative #1

The **Beginning** and **Intermediate** levels could be implemented in elementary school and continued in junior high school and in senior high school. Students could register in French 31a, 31b and 31c to complete the **Advanced** level.

Students wishing to use language courses to fulfill university and Rutherford Scholarship or other requirements could register concurrently in the French 31a, 31b, 31c and French 10, 20, 30 streams. For example, a student in grade 10 could register in both French 31a and French 10, and receive a final mark in both courses and five credits in the higher French program stream, French 31a in this case. In grade 11, the student could register in both French 31b and French 20, and receive a final mark in both courses and five credits in French 31b. In grade 12, the student could register in both French 31c and French 30, and receive a final mark in each course and credits in both courses. A student could receive up to 20 credits through concurrent registration in the two language streams. The higher final mark in concurrent registration could be used for university entrance and Rutherford Scholarship purposes. (For more details on concurrent registration, see questions 5-9.)

Alternative #2

The **Beginning** level could be implemented in junior high school and the **Intermediate** and **Advanced** levels in senior high school. In senior high school, students could register in the two **Intermediate** level courses, French 20 and French 30, and also in the **Advanced** level courses (French 31a, 31b, 31c), according to their learning needs and aspirations.

Alternative #3

The **Beginning** and **Intermediate** levels could be implemented in senior high school through a four-course sequence: French 13, French 10, French 20 and French 30.

French 13 and French 10 are **Beginning** level courses, and French 20 and French 30 are **Intermediate** level courses.

11. **How do the new senior high school French as a second language courses fit in with the Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced French levels?**

Beginning level

French 13

French 10

Intermediate level

French 20

French 30

Advanced level

French 31a

French 31b

French 31c

12. **In what years will the new French courses be implemented provincially?**

Beginning level

French 13 1992-93

French 10

Intermediate level

French 20 1993-94

French 30

Advanced level

French 31a 1994-95

French 31b

French 31c

The implementation dates at the local school jurisdiction level will depend on current programming and future plans. Some school jurisdictions may need more or

less time to implement the new FSL program. For example, school jurisdictions commencing **Beginning** level courses in 1992-93 (French 13) may implement French 10 in 1993-94, French 20 in 1994-95, French 30 in 1995-96, French 31a in 1996-97, and so on.

13. In what years will the current course titles be eliminated?

French 10S	1993-94
French 20S/10N	1994-95
French 30S/20N	1995-96
French 30N	1996-97

14. What will be the potential impact of these changes on school jurisdictions?

Most school jurisdictions already offer **Beginning** level courses in French as a second language, either at the elementary or junior high school level. Some jurisdictions that are currently offering only a three-year sequence at the senior high school level will need to add another **Beginning** level French course at the senior high or junior high school level through regular classroom instruction or distance education.

15. Can students receive credits for courses completed at the elementary and junior high school levels?

At this time, students may receive credits for courses offered at the senior high school level only.

Students may receive credits for a waived prerequisite course and a "P" or "pass" upon completion of the next or higher ranking high school course in that sequence. For example, a student placed in French 20 may receive five credits and a "P" or "pass" for French 10 through the Waiver of Prerequisites and Credits for Waived Prerequisite Courses provision on page 58 of the Guide to Education, Senior High School Handbook, 1991-92.

Waived prerequisite credits will not be granted for French 13, as this course represents a sequence below the French 10/20/30 stream and it is expected that most students will have completed this level prior to senior high school.

16. **What are possible scenarios for students taking French at the senior high school level?**

Scenario #1

Students entering senior high school may be placed in a course corresponding to their entry-level language proficiency, ranging from French 13 (**Beginning** French 1) to French 31c (**Advanced** French 9) to French Language Arts 10/20/30 to Français 10/20/30.

Scenario #2

Students who have successfully completed the **Beginning** and **Intermediate** levels of the French as a second language program prior to senior high school may register in the **Advanced** level courses in senior high school: French 31a/31b/31c. Students requiring final marks in the lower level French 10/20/30 stream may register concurrently in French 31a and French 10 at the "10" level, French 31b and French 20 at the "20" level, and French 31c and French 30 at the "30" level. (See questions 5-9.)

Scenario #3

Students who have successfully completed the **Beginning** level prior to senior high school may register in the **Intermediate** level courses, French 20 and French 30. In this scenario, students may obtain five credits for French 10 as a waived prerequisite course and a "P" or "pass" upon successful completion of French 20. Interested students may continue to French 31a after completing French 30.

Scenario #4

Students who are beginning French in grade 10 may register in the **Beginning** level courses, French 13 and French 10, and in the **Intermediate** level courses, French 20

and French 30. To achieve the new French 30 **Intermediate** level standard, some school jurisdictions that now offer only French 10, 20 and 30 will need to offer another French course at the junior or senior high school levels (through regular classroom instruction or distance education).

17. What is the maximum number of credits that can be allocated to a second language?

No maximum limit has been set on the number of credits for second languages. The requirements of a Senior High School Advanced Diploma (1991-92) are 56 specified credits in core courses, 10 credits in category C courses and 6 credits in Physical Education and CALM, for a total of 72 specified credits.

School administrative staff and guidance counsellors should help students determine the appropriate number of language credits for them to take so as to meet their language learning needs and aspirations, and university entrance and Rutherford Scholarship requirements.

18. Do the provisions for concurrent registration apply to French Language Arts and Français?

Yes, concurrent registration provisions apply to French Language Arts 10/20/30 and to Français 10/20/30.

19. What can we expect in French as a second language program in the future?

Over the next ten years, Alberta Education will examine the feasibility of raising the provincial standard to **Advanced** level 9. Across Canada, the majority of French as a second language programs begin in elementary schools. As a result, many Canadian students are achieving **Advanced** level 9 by the time they leave school. A major factor in our ability to establish higher standards will be the availability of a sufficient number of qualified teachers of French as a second language.

20. How should a school jurisdiction handle these changes?

As a first step, each school jurisdiction should develop a policy on language standards, concurrent registration, credits and final marks at the senior high school level.

21. How much time is needed to implement the program?

The French as a second language curriculum is based on the current recommended time allotments: 90 hours per year at the elementary school level, 75 hours per year at the junior high school level and 125 hours per year at the senior high school level.

Although provincial time allotments for French as a second language are not mandated, the minimum recommended time is an average of 30 to 40 minutes a day in elementary and junior high school. This recommendation is based on research and experience in successful programs. Sufficient time is an important factor in developing students' communication skills.

The National Core French Study has reported that the more years of exposure that students have to French as a second language instruction, the better they perform on language competency tests.

22. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do teachers need to offer the proposed French as a second language program?

All teachers of French as a second language, regardless of what level they are teaching, should strive to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes to the Advanced level of proficiency in French. This level of proficiency includes:

- the ability to understand, orally and in writing, the meaning of the major and supporting ideas of an oral or written text which contains both familiar and unfamiliar ideas

- the ability to express ideas spontaneously, in a coherent oral or written communication, about concrete topics such as background, family, interests, work, travel, current events and selected abstract topics

- the ability to understand the essential contributions of francophones to our culture and our society

- the ability to use basic second-language learning strategies.

Some training in second language methodology is important. Teachers need to know how students learn a second language and how to develop their communicative abilities and cultural understanding. A teacher must also have a positive attitude towards the French language and culture in order to promote the acquisition of the French language.

23. How can teachers upgrade their French language proficiency and learn how to teach a second language?

The Universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge all offer courses in the French language and in second language acquisition and methodology. The Faculté St-Jean of the University of Alberta offers intensive French immersion experiences during the summer, and Athabasca University offers distance learning courses in French language and culture.

Alberta Advanced Education offers bursaries for second language teachers who wish to upgrade their skills. Information can be obtained at 422-4245.

School districts and consortia of school districts across Alberta have organized (or are organizing) French language and methodology inservice sessions for teachers of French as a second language.

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For further information, please contact the following Alberta Education personnel:

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